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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on Springfield (Missouri) public schools and the superintendency of Harry P. Study, a progressive educator who advocated "education for a democratic community" during the 1920s in a city and state that held conservative values and beliefs. Noting that Study was a cosmopolitan and experienced educator, the paper examines his struggle with the philosophy of the Springfield schools which had two dominant and conflicting purposes for schooling: education for democratic citizenship and vocationalism, especially "life-adjustment" education. The paper has three purposes that provide direction for the scope of this work: (1) to describe the translation of progressive educational theory into school practices; (2) to analyze the interplay between a very conservative school community and a liberal, progressive school superintendent; and (3) to examine the democratic education programs initiated in Springfield from 1924 to 1952, with particular attention to the ambiguities in the existence of racially segregated schools within a system devoted to democratic education. (Contains 81 footnotes.) (BT)

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**The Eclipse of Progressive, Democratic Education in the United States: A Case Study of Springfield, Missouri Schools, 1924-1952**

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In her recent book, *Democracy on Trial*, Jean Bethke Elshtain eloquently summarizes the concerns of many contemporary historians, political scientists, and educators about the fragility of democracy in the United States. "American democracy today," she observes, "is not confronted by 'the dictaters,' haters and destroyers of democracy abroad, but by repudiation of democracy in its most generous incarnations from within."[1] Elshtain has articulated along with others[2] the prospect of democracy's gradual demise as a result of the ever-increasing demands of individuals for greater rights and economic goods without concern for their individual responsibility and the common good. She has reminded us that democracy does not afford us with simple answers to complex social issues. In particular, Elshtain has cautioned us against the all-too familiar panacea of a curriculum which prepares students to find jobs when they leave school, resulting in what she describes as a "watery adaptation above authentic excellence."[3]

This paper focuses on the Springfield, Missouri schools and the superintendency of Harry P. Study. A progressive educator, H.P. Study came to southwest Missouri and the city of Springfield in the 1920s. Twenty-eight years later he retired at the request of his board of education. During his tenure as Superintendent, Study advocated "education for a democratic community" in a city and state that held conservative values and beliefs. Statewide, for example, a 1946 debate flared in the Missouri state legislature regarding a residency requirement for the state superintendent of schools. Republican Representative J. S. Farquhar of Cape Girardeau County summarized conservative views when he stated,

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[1] Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial* (New York, 1995), xiii.

[2] Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York, 1967); Robert H. Wiebe, *The Segmented Society: An Introduction to the Meaning of America* (New York, 1975); Robert H. Wiebe, *Self-rule: A cultural History of American Democracy* (Chicago, 1995); Amy Gutmann, *Liberal Equality* (Cambridge, England, 1980); Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Laurence (Cambridge, 1989); and Benjamin Barber, *An Aristocracy of Everyone: The Politics of Education and the Future of America* (New York, 1992).

[3] Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial*, 80-81.

"[A] man hired from outside the state might bring subversive ideals with him to be taught to Missouri youngsters." The state representative continued, "Do we want our children to be exposed to atheism, evolution, and everything else?"[4] Harry P. Study was by no means a native Missourian. His graduate education brought him to both Boston and New York City and as a young man he had traveled in Europe. In the four decades of his leadership, Study navigated the crosscurrents of educational reform that faced the conservative, racially segregated community of Springfield, Missouri. The circumstances that surrounded the Springfield schools serve to illustrate the contradictions inherent in progressive educational theory and practice. This paper examines the struggle of Harry P. Study and the Springfield schools with two predominant and conflicting purposes for schooling: education for democratic citizenship and vocationalism, especially "life-adjustment" education. Three purposes provide direction for the scope of this work. First, this work describes the translation of progressive educational theory into school practices. The various strands of progressive education, including their contradictory purposes and practices, were implemented under the leadership of Harry P. Study. Second, this paper analyzes the interplay between a very conservative school-community and a liberal, progressive school superintendent. And third, it examines the democratic education programs initiated in Springfield, Missouri from 1924 to 1952 with particular attention to the ambiguities in the existence of racially segregated schools within a system devoted to democratic education. The Springfield schools were segregated. One school, the Lincoln School, served the African American community until Willard Graff, H.P. Study's successor, achieved a swift and *apparently* trouble-free desegregation.

**The Fragile Republic**

From the founding of the American republic to the first decade of the twentieth century, cultural continuity in various forms provided a framework for American education. In New England, Americans were educated to achieve religious salvation. With the dawn of the early national period three themes came to define the cultural framework which the coming generation was to inherit: preservation of the republican experiment, growth of capitalism as defined by individual initiative and small-scale enterprise, and a belief

[4] The Springfield *Daily News*, February 7, 1946, p. 4.

in commonly shared values expressed in Protestant theology.[5] The foundation of beliefs which defined the purposes of common school education in the nineteenth century, including the academies and the few public high schools as creations of the late 1800s, were challenged by modernity and the visible social changes accompanying the trilogy of urbanization, industrialization, and the influx of eastern European immigrants. Especially among intellectuals, science became a powerful organizing principal for the *Weltanschauung* of reformers who advocated a rational response to what appeared as chaotic and threatening changes in American life.[6]

Vocationalism was assumed to be a minor purpose of education throughout the nineteenth century. In a society where a large proportion of the population was engaged in agricultural activities, education was not strongly associated with vocational opportunities. For those individuals in the labor market expanding employment opportunities, especially for white males, was of little concern. The common belief was that individuals who possessed a basic literacy and good character, as defined by republican and pan-Protestant virtues, could find a job and could advance as opportunities became available.

Reformers of the nineteenth century concentrated on molding the character of the individual because they held a faith in the ideal of the American republic. The idea of shaping an individual's character had its origins with Benjamin Rush's call "to convert men into republican machines."[7] For example, these reformers were much exercised over what they perceived as a growing problem of pauperism. Paupers, unlike the "worthy poor," were seen as individuals who would remain in a continual state of economic distress due to character flaws such as laziness or alcoholism. One of the prime factors leading to the founding of public schools in the 1830s was to wean the children of paupers away from the

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[5] See Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), pp. 3-29. Kaestle introduces these three themes in his introductory chapters and elaborates upon them throughout his work.

[6] For an analysis of the changes during this period, see Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); Robert H. Wiebe, *Self-Rule: A Cultural History of American Democracy*(Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995); and Walter T.K. Nugent, *Structures of American Social History* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1981).

[7] Benjamin Rush, "A Plan for the Establishment of Public Schools and the Diffusion of Knowledge in Pennsylvania; to Which Are Added, Thoughts Upon the Mode of Education, Proper in a Republic," in Frederick Rudolph, *Essays on Education*, pp. 16-17.

characteristics of their parents.

Early twentieth century reformers were less sanguine about the adequacy and goodness of the existing social and political arrangements. To sustain progress and meet the demands of a rapidly changing society they turned to the ideas of Lester Frank Ward who elevated the role of education as an engine of social progress. Ward challenged William Graham Sumner's sociological theory which limited the ability of individuals and groups to modify the structure of society and the direction of social change. For Sumner, public education was merely a poor substitute for parental responsibility. Ward, as popularized by Albion Small and John Dewey, moved education to the center of social change. As Lawrence Cremin has noted, Lester Frank Ward saw public education "as the only feasible device for turning evolution to the larger social good."[8]

Both Sumner and Ward believed that society was undergoing profound changes primarily in the areas of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. They shared a faith in the importance of science to life in a modern society. However, they differed dramatically regarding the use of science. For Sumner and his followers such as David Snedden, individuals that the historian David Tyack has labeled "administrative progressives," science was the means used by educational experts to measure students' abilities and to sort students into their vocational destinies as determined by their intellectual abilities and the needs of society. David Snedden, an educational sociologist, stressed social control and "fitting" students into the existing society. Snedden was an undergraduate student of Edward A. Ross at Stanford University. Ross, the architect of social control, called for "restraint of the individual on behalf of the group."[9] Snedden's graduate work was at Columbia University where his primary work was on the virtues of the reform school (an institution which educators could totally control). Upon receiving his doctorate, he taught at Columbia University prior to becoming the first Commissioner of Education in Massachusetts. Consistent with social control theory, Snedden believed that women and the "rank and file" students

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[8] Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 98.

[9] Edward A. Krug, *The Shaping of the American High School* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1964), pp. 249-250.

needed to learn their place in society.[10]

For Lester Frank Ward and individuals such as John Dewey, who Tyack has classified as "pedagogical progressives," science and the scientific method was a means at the disposal of individuals, a powerful tool to gain a measure of control over their destinies within society. Thus, John Dewey would see science as the method of intelligence, the means by which individuals would come to better understand the world and their relationship with that world and other persons. For progressive reformers, it was a means to ameliorate the harsh conditions of urban industrial life for the poor. Within "pedagogical progressivism," there was an on-going debate between Boyd H. Bode of Ohio State University and George S. Counts of Teachers College of Columbia University. Bode stressed reflective inquiry or the application of scientific method in arriving at decisions.[11] Counts emphasized social reconstructionism, the inculcation of humane

[10] Ibid., p. 252.

[11] Interpretations of Reflective Inquiry vary. According to Alan F. Griffin, a prominent social studies educator from Ohio State University during the 1940s through the early 1960s, reflective thinking required a history teacher "to bring appropriate historical materials, plus whatever else he knows, to bear upon the beliefs of young people, in such a way as to stimulate and to aid in carrying forward within the experience of each student the process of reflective thinking." As a result of reflective thinking, the teacher will "break the grip of tradition upon the mind of the child, so that tradition becomes his counsellor rather than his master. . . ." Griffin's insights were written in his 1942 dissertation, *A Philosophical Approach to the Subject-Matter Preparation of Teachers of History*, directed by Boyd H. Bode of Ohio State University, an influential Progressive philosopher of education. Griffin's unpublished dissertation was recently issued. See Alan F. Griffin, *A Philosophical Approach to the Subject-Matter Preparation of Teachers of History* (Washington, D. C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1992), p. 43. Other social studies educators, perhaps most notably Shirley Engle and Anna Ochoa, emphasize reflective thinking to enlighten or solve current social problems. History and the social sciences are used as data to inform the decision-making process which also involves the analysis of an individual's values. See Shirley Engle and Anna Ochoa, *Education for Democratic Citizenship* (New York: Teachers' College Press, 1988). William Van Til introduced the problems-based curriculum, which he labeled the "project method" in workshops beginning in 1942 in Springfield, Missouri. In the 1930s, Van Til taught at the Laboratory School at The Ohio State University. There, he developed a method of teaching in which students helped define the topics which would be studied in social studies. During the summer workshops in Springfield, teachers determined the topics studied. We believe the General Education curriculum – an integrated social studies-English curriculum – was modeled after Van Til's ideas. See, Lynn R. Nelson and Frederick D. Drake, "William Van Til: A Persistent Progressive's Relationship to the National council for the Social Studies," in Walter Schultz, Editor, *A Continuing Look at the Master of the Social Studies Movement* Bulletin 8,1996-1997 (1998): 136-169. In an interview with William Van Til, he informed us that the idea of the project method was in part influenced by William Heard Kilpatrick. The Columbia Professor used this method even with large graduate classes where he would break students into smaller groups with each group responsible to define and examine a particular problem. See William Van Til, Coffman Distinguished Professor of Education, Indiana State University, interview by Lynn R. Nelson and Frederick D. Drake, Terra Haute, Indiana, 1 August 1997, transcript, Oral History Program, Center for the History of Education, The University of Texas at Austin and Kappa Delta Pi, West Lafayette, Indiana.

values to create a more just society.

By 1918, vocational education found a formal status as one of "seven cardinal principles" in the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (CRSE).[12] In the 1940s, John W. Studebaker, Commissioner on Education, and Charles A. Prosser, lobbyist of the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education (NSPIE), pressed for a "life-adjustment" curriculum for secondary schools. At a late spring 1945 conference held at the Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, D.C., vocational education leaders established a claim that would redirect the course of American education.[13] Charles A. Prosser drafted a resolution that classified 20% of American high school students as college bound. He proposed that vocational education assume leadership for the remaining 80% of American secondary students. This 1945 resolution was later published as *Life Adjustment Education for Every Youth* in 1951 by the U.S. Office of Education.[14] Prosser and other NSPIE members formulated the 20-60-20 division of American youth. They expressed concern that along with the 20% of secondary students already receiving vocational training the 60% of the secondary students who were neither headed for college nor the job market immediately after high school were "ill-served" by the traditional academic curriculum. Prosser, the NSPIE, and Studebaker proposed that "life-adjustment" should be the organizing principle for the majority of high school students.

**Harry P. Study**

Harry P. Study came to the Springfield Public Schools in 1924. A member of the Methodist Church, he attended every Sunday and sat in the "Amen" pew. In his later years, he was remembered for his enthusiasm and was easily identified in the front of the church by his "great stock of gray hair."[15] At

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[12] [NEA] Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, Bulletin 35 (1918) as found in Hazel Whitman Hertzberg, *Social Studies Reform, 1918-1980* (Boulder, Colorado: A Project SPAN Report, 1981), pp. 28-29.

[13] Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, pp. 321 and 333-334.

[14] Ibid., p. 334 and Arthur E. Bestor, *Educational Wastelands: The Retreat from Learning in Our Public Schools* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1953), pp. 81-82.

[15] In an interview with Charles Gray, a former teacher in the Springfield schools, we gained some insight into Harry P. Study's character. Gray commented that while he (Charles Gray) did not attend church each Sunday, he was certain that Harry P. Study did. Charles Gray, letter to Frederick D. Drake, 6 December 1996. Gray's comment was inserted into a draft of this paper which he returned as part of his review and response.

school, students fondly referred to him as "Frosty." H.P. Study was a graduate of Baker University at Baldwin, Kansas and received two master's degrees, one from Boston University and the other from Columbia University.[16] His first administrative position was at Eureka, Kansas in 1903 where he served as principal of the elementary and high schools. Additionally, he taught five classes while carrying out his duties as an administrator.[17] Study left Eureka and assumed a principalship in Ottawa, Kansas. Then he traveled in Europe with friends from Princeton University selling stereographs. He later returned to the United States where he taught history at Tome School for Boys at Port Deposit, Maryland and then was an instructor at Horace Mann High School in New York City.[18]

Study had brought progressive education to the Springfield school system and its very traditional community. For his efforts he had received national acclaim in *Life* magazine in 1938. The magazine ran a pictorial of Springfield schools. As part of his progressive initiative, he had invited renowned educational leaders such as Ralph Tyler and Hilda Taba[19] of the University of Chicago to work with Springfield teachers in developing a general education curriculum for the high school. They came to Springfield in 1941 and 1942 fresh from their work on the Eight-Year Study.[20] Throughout the 1940s, Study invited

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[16]In a review of this paper Charles Gray informed us that Harry P. Study was usually addressed as "Dr. Study." Perhaps, he was awarded an honorary doctorate. However, we have not been able to confirm whether this reference was earned or simply as sign of respect. Charles Gray, letter to Frederick D. Drake, 6 December 1996. Gray's comment was inserted into a draft of this paper which he returned as part of his review and response.

[17]"Study Urges Teachers To Avoid Dull Classes," *The Leader and Press* (Springfield), 23 June 1949. This article and other articles cited in Springfield, Missouri newspapers are found in The Collection of Newspaper Articles, Springfield, Missouri Schools, Kept By the Public Information Officer of the School District. Several newspapers were printed in Springfield. *The Leader and News* was an evening edition, and *The Daily News* was a morning edition. Both papers had the same owners, but they often ran different features and articles. Other newspapers included *Leader and Press* and *A Union Labor Record*.

[18]"H.P. Study a Living Symbol of Springfield Schools," *The Daily News* (Springfield), 8 July 1949.

[19]In a review of this paper Gray observed, "I was influenced twice by these folks (Ralph Tyler and Hilda Taba): (1) while at Central High School in Gen. Ed 1951 and (2) as a Social Studies Educator (1960s and onward . . .)." Charles Gray, letter to Frederick D. Drake, 6 December 1996. Gray's comment was inserted into a draft of this paper which he returned as part of his review and response.

[20]"Praise Our School's Leadership: Columbia U Educators Warmly Defend Survey," *The Leader and Press*, (Springfield) 17 November 1948 and "A Mutual Benefit Arrangement," NEA Journal, January 1950. For descriptions of the Eight-Year Study, see Wilford M. Aikin, *The Story of the Eight-Year Study*, Adventure in American Education, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942) and Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation Of The School* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), pp. 250-270.

William Van Til to lead teams of educators who worked with Springfield teachers during six-week summer workshops. A prominent progressive educator and colleague of William Heard Kilpatrick, Van Til used the project method where teachers helped establish the agenda for the workshop. The General Education, which became the centerpiece of progressive education at Springfield High School, was one product of these summer workshops. Van Til led three such workshops in 1942, 1946, and 1947. Van Til revisited the school district in a new capacity in 1948 as a member of Illini Associates comprised of University of Illinois faculty members who evaluated the effectiveness of Springfield's educational program.[21]

Well-liked by most of his faculty, Study had fought for higher salaries, building expansion, and most importantly introduced progressive ways of teaching. Evalyn C. Johnson, a former teacher, described the changes Study made as moving from "product to process." The veteran Johnson, who taught in the Springfield system from 1928 to 1956,[22] characterized the progressive approach under Study as a willingness "to turn some of the control of learning over to the students." Study called for Springfield teachers to develop their students' thinking skills, improve their interpersonal relationships, and address student interests. Above all, students were expected to "become thinking human beings, people who could examine critically a situation and make intelligent decisions."[23]

The early 1950s no longer emphasized the progressive education that Springfield schools had implemented. Progressive education, in fact, was no longer mentioned publicly. Springfield's experiment in progressive education had come to an end in 1952 when the Board of Education asked for Study to retire. Study's successor was Willard Graff who immediately announced "We want our educational program to be

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[21] William Van Til, *My Way of Looking at It* (San Francisco, 1996), 209-210 and Lynn R. Nelson and Frederick D. Drake, "William Van Til: A Persistent Progressive's Relationship to the National council for the Social Studies," in Walter Schultz, Editor, *A Continuing Look at the Master of the Social Studies Movement* Bulletin 8,1996-1997 (1998): 136-169.

[22]The length of Evalyn C. Johnson's tenure is unclear as of the writing of this paper. In *So that all may learn: A history of the Springfield, Missouri, Public Schools*, Johnson's career ended in 1956. However, Gray informed us that Johnson was still teaching at Parkview in 1959 when he left the Springfield schools. Charles Gray, letter to Frederick D. Drake, 6 December 1996.

[23]*So that all may learn: A history of the Springfield, Missouri, Public Schools* (September, 1995), p. 45.

progressive with the word progressive being spelled with a small 'p'."[24]

**Assault on Progressive Education in Springfield**

The progressivism practiced in Springfield schools had come under scrutiny in the mid and late 1940s as Springfield citizens became more and more concerned about progressive curriculum. Parents in Springfield questioned the effectiveness of progressive education in both theory and practice. Some parents raised the issue of whether or not the teaching methods currently in use in Springfield schools were effective means to teach basic skills and content. Parents voiced their concern that students who left Springfield for other communities often found themselves "behind the students" in their new schools. Parents also inquired about Springfield's practice of hiring teachers who were drawn from the community.[25] Could these teachers put into practice the progressive techniques that Study advocated? Concerned citizens associated these methods as originating in Eastern colleges. Could such ideas be transplanted to the midwest?

Parents were concerned about the abilities of their teachers, and they reported that they knew of Springfield faculty who felt ill-prepared to implement progressive strategies touted by the superintendent. "Teachers [in Springfield] don't really like the system in operation here, but are afraid are to say so under threat of being fired," claimed a parent spokesperson.[26] At a series of October and November 1947 meetings parents demanded that a survey be conducted to determine the effectiveness of progressive education in their schools. Parents wanted comparisons to be made with schools that were not part of the Springfield system,[27] and they wanted local patrons of the schools to conduct the survey.[28] Parents were

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[24]*So that all may learn*, p. 55.

[25]According to Gray, "The Springfield schools also had a reputation for low pay (comments of Gray's mother and from her friends who were teachers). This condition "might be another reason for recruiting home-town teachers." Charles Gray, letter to Frederick D. Drake, 6 December 1996. Gray's comment was inserted into a draft of this paper which he returned as part of his review and response.

[26]"Patrons Demand Thorough Probe of City Schools: Parents from Sunshine District Appear Before Education Board to Flay Progressive Education," *The Daily News*, (Springfield) 5 November 1947.

[27]"Puzzled Sunshiners Start Asking About 'Progressive' Ideas," *The News and Leader* (Springfield), 14 October 1947.

concerned about the following: their children were not taught fundamental skills; their children were retained or had to study to catch up when transferring to other school systems; students coming in to Springfield schools were "ahead" of their children in the Springfield system; the Springfield schools were inadequate in preparing their children for college or business; there was too much "play" in the Springfield schools; and school officials intimidated parents or teachers who tried to question progressive education.

Critics dominated letters to the editors in the two Springfield newspapers, *The Daily News and The News and Leader*, and critical comments held sway in news reports and articles that publicized progressive practices in the Springfield school system. Public challenges to Study's implementation of progressivism had first appeared in 1943 and built to a climax in 1947. Initially, opposition to Study and progressivism came from dissatisfied parents. For example, in a letter to the editor, a mother exclaimed how she and other mothers were "bitterly dissatisfied with the progress their children are making toward education."[29] Other parents chimed in to encourage a protest against progressivism. They urged that progressive methods "will continue so long as you sit passively and permit it to exist."[30] In 1945, there were calls to organize collectively against the methods used in the community's schools, and warnings were made that to act individually in protest would only produce frustration. By 1947, parents had organized to challenge Harry P. Study and the methods of teaching he had advocated for Springfield schools.

Parents organized their challenge to progressivism by creating a committee to examine the practices of teaching and learning in Springfield. Parents searched for any individual who would support their views opposing progressive education. The Chair of the Concerned Sunshine School Parents quoted Nicholas Murray Butler, former President of Columbia University, as equating progressivism to "a rabbit system of education." The leader of concerned parents quoted Butler as saying, "A rabbit may run about a garden and feed upon the plants, flowers and weeds at will."[31] The patron quoting Butler expressed a

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[28]"Parents Named To Conduct Survey," *The News and Leader* (Springfield), 15 October 1947.

[29]Letter to the Editor, *The Leader and News* (Springfield), 15 April 1945.

[30]Letter to the Editor, *The Daily News* (Springfield), 27 May 1945.

[31] "Patrons Demand Thorough Probe of City Schools: Parents from Sunshine District Appear Before

concern for the lack of structure in progressive education and expressed her dissatisfaction with the bitter invective, "My child has to be taught reading and spelling at home." Furthermore, she focused the blame not on teachers but on "the administration" and "the Columbia University specialists" who had come to Springfield in the summers of 1946 and 1947 to conduct summer institutes for teachers. Referring to the election year of 1948, she concluded that the administrators and specialists were "off the deep end as much as Henry Wallace."[32]

Testimony against progressivism was also garnered from former students of Springfield schools. A Springfield High School graduate, who at the time was at Washington University, equated progressive education at Springfield to communism in that "neither system worked."[33] A student who graduated in 1943 claimed that "he lacked basic education in English and mathematics, something on which his future college work is dependent." He continued that children in the fourth grade at Springfield were discussing the atomic bomb in classes. In his view, such discussions were "silly." He recalled that he and other students had been able to "talk the teacher out of things because we didn't want to do them."[34]

One of the most vocal opponents of Study was a businessman, John Rush, a cattle commissioner and broker and former teacher at Southwest Missouri State. Rush was a constant thorn in the side of Study and the exchange between the superintendent and businessman became personal. Rush chided Study at meetings that were held throughout the year 1947. The sharp-tongued critic conjectured: "Might there not be some correlation between no homework and delinquency?"[35]

By 1947 parents had organized an attack that seriously challenged Study's efforts to maintain progressivism in Springfield, but the Springfield superintendent did not recant his beliefs in progressivism. Harry P. Study commanded a reputation of respect in a community that cherished values and moral

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Education Board to Flay Progressive Education," *The Daily News* (Springfield), 5 November 1947.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] "School Patrons Ask Survey of Methods: Board Hears Sunshiners' Views, Other Meetings To Be Arranged," *The News and Leader* (Springfield), 5 November 1947.

[35] Ibid.

character. He was quite capable of delivering speeches with fervor and conviction and was adept at managing a variety of constituencies.

Study was an astute politician whose progressivism embodied the contradictions of progressive education. The text of his remarks often varied with the composition of his audience. In his rhetoric, Study often emphasized "pedagogical progressivism" which he defined as problem-centered and which required interdisciplinary instruction. He and his teachers translated these ideas into Springfield's General Education program. He frequently mixed themes drawn from progressive education. On some occasions his remarks or writings stressed social reconstructionism. Citing the efforts of the Horace Mann-Lincoln schools, he once urged "the importance of experimentation in schools." He told a Springfield audience of principals and supervisors, "The field of experimentation has no limits. There is no reason why we should not carry out experimentation in the field of education."[36] In a similar vein, at the closing of a 1946 Summer Institute for Teachers, he praised the Columbia staff as "dangerous people" and "frontier thinkers."[37] On another occasion, the Superintendent of Springfield schools, added the element of social gospelism to make a point. While speaking to YMCA members at a pre-Easter banquet, Study took an almost evangelical stance and sternly warned his audience, "You cannot think without confusion today unless you are a follower of Jesus Christ."[38] The superintendent's zeal for reform can be traced to his undergraduate education at Baker College in Baldwin, Kansas. Baker was a Methodist college that imbued its graduates with the social gospel. Interestingly, Geroge S. Counts was also a graduate of Baker. The foundation for Study's social reform had continued at Boston University and he applied these ideas as a graduate student and teacher at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Study also employed the "life-adjustment" variant of progressivism, at least in the latter 1940s. He warmly endorsed this variant of progressive education in 1947 when he spoke in defense of progressive education to local community organizations and teachers. During a 1947 Summer Institute, which was

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[36] "Schools Require 'Alert' Teachers," *The News and Leader* (Springfield), 31 August 1947.

[37] "Teachers End Summer Course Workshop: Theories Ready for Tryout," *Leader and Press* (Springfield), 3 July 1946.

[38] "Good Christian Must Be A Good Politician, Too," *Leader and Press* (Springfield), April 1946.

titled "Learning How to Live." Study summarized his views, "Education is not so much a matter of information as a way of living."[39] Schools, he believed, needed to provide students with an opportunity for social interaction.

The chief administrator refused to relinquish the curriculum direction he had created in Springfield and countered his critics by placing articles in local newspapers that described "life-adjustment" education in positive terms. Through Springfield's local newspaper, the *Leader and Press*, Study informed the community about the merits of this new curriculum and the fact that Springfield Senior High School was cited as one of the "best examples" of 'life-adjustment education" by the Federal Security Agency of the Office of Education. "Life-adjustment" education was described in a glowing terms. It was touted as more meaningful to students than the curriculum of a traditional education. "Life-adjustment education" was introduced to the citizens of Springfield as "a new phrase coined by educators to indicate the type of schooling designed to turn out good citizens rather than people bloated with useless learning." Students at Springfield Senior High School had required social studies curriculum framed around a problems approach. The series of courses included a world problems class in the 10th grade, a similarly organized American history course in the 11th grade, and American Problems in the 12th grade.[40]

Study took other actions to save the progressive experiment he had brought to the Springfield community. He circumvented parent wishes for a survey conducted by school patrons to examine the effectiveness of instruction compared to more traditional methods as taught in schools outside the district. Study outmaneuvered his critics by calling upon a cadre of experts to examine the Springfield school system. These experts chose to compare the school's rationale and practices to the current literature regarding the characteristics of progressive education. These experts came from Illinois, specifically the University of Illinois. The Illini Survey Associates from the College of Education was organized by the Dean of the College, Willard B. Spalding, and directed by Francis G. Cornell, Professor of Education and Director of Bureau of Research and Service in the College of Education at the University of Illinois. The

[39] "Learning How to Live," *Leader and Press* (Springfield), 13 August 1947.

[40] "SHS Course Given Praise," *Leader and Press* (Springfield), 14 November 1948.

Illini Survey team was comprised of 31 senior members and 35 junior members. Collectively, this 66-member team investigated Springfield schools. In 1948, the Illini Survey Associates distilled over a thousand pages of information into a 247 page defense of progressive education as practiced in Springfield.[41]

As the team began to organize its survey task, several Springfield citizens questioned the participation of one of its members, Dr. William Van Til.[42] A recognized leader of progressive education, Van Til had been part of the summer institutes in Springfield on three prior occasions. Van Til had been the Director of the Cultural-Education Group in New York City and was associated with the Horace Mann-Lincoln schools. He had recently accepted a position as Professor of Education at the University of Illinois. During the summers of 1942, 1946, and 1947, Van Til had made numerous speeches to the Springfield community at large including one to the Chamber of Commerce on July 2, 1946. At a meeting with business leaders, Van Til argued for a modern education that would "fit them [the students] for this difficult world." He also raised the specter of disaffected, aimless German youth following World War I and compared the current situation in the United States to the German experience. He asked his audience the question: "Do you want to see them [American students] in 'movements'?" Van Til believed Springfield schools needed to address this dilemma and could do so with his prescriptions. Because of Van Tils' close affiliation with the development of summer institutes, several Springfield school patrons were critical of his participation in the survey. They charged that Van Til had helped "shape" the school curriculum, and they questioned his "impartiality" as a member of the Illini Survey Team.[43] When the criticism about Van Til's participation surfaced, Study said that the school board "had specified that Doctor Van Til was not to participate in the Survey."[44]

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[41] Illini Survey Associates, College of Education, University of Illinois, *A Look At Springfield Schools: A Report of the Survey of the Public Schools of Springfield, Missouri* (Champaign: Stipes Publishing Company), 1948.

[42] "'Impartial' School Survey Gets Started: Experts Put Stress On Having Free Hand; Professor Van Til Won't Be Excluded," *Leader and Press* (Springfield), 16 March 1948.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

The director of the survey, Francis G. Cornell, immediately took an aggressive position in leading the examination of Springfield schools. Ignoring the protests of several school patrons and the admonition of Superintendent Study, Cornell retorted in an imperious manner: "No one is going to tell us who we can or can't use in this survey." As if missing the point, Cornell dismissed protesters with the remark, "It wouldn't be impartial if anyone could."[45] Three weeks later Cornell again took a firm position regarding the "impartiality" of the survey. In a curt tone, he remarked: "We will write our own ticket."[46]

Simultaneously, Willard B. Spalding, Dean of the College of Education at the University of Illinois, spoke to the Parent Teachers Association while the survey team conducted its study of Springfield schools. Spalding told parents, "Too many high schools deal in theory -- which is fine if a youngster goes on to college -- and not enough in practical training for those who will end their formal education." The University of Illinois Dean "enlightened" PTA members with the observation: "The tragedy of education today is that the modern high school cannot organize itself in order that a typical adolescent can find his way about." He concluded his remarks with the conviction that the "student should be prepared in high school for what he is going to do in life."[47]

When the Illini Survey was reported to the community, Study had temporarily survived the threat to his efforts to save the progressive experiment in Springfield. Study's position, in fact, had been temporarily strengthened by the Illini Survey. Docia Karell, a news reporter for the *Leader and Press*, had developed her own column over the years. She reported to the public that "two things stand out" about the Illini Survey. First, the report "all-out justifies the modern education that has antagonized some people here for so long." And second, the report's chief criticism of Springfield's modern education is "that there should be still more" with "less resistance to the modern approach, and less persistence in out-moded practices."[48] Interestingly, within a year of her support of the results reported in the Illini Survey, Docia

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[45] Ibid.

[46] "School Survey Loses Tension for Teachers," *Leader and Press* (Springfield), 25 March 1948.

[47] "High School's Job Stressed," *Leader and Press* (Springfield), 15 May 1948.

[48] "Docia Karell's Survey of the Survey," *Leader and Press* (Springfield), 16 November 1948. It should be noted Docia Karell was the pen name of Helen Laverty, she was an employee of the Springfield Board of Education and reported articles in the *Leader and Press* under the pseudonym, Docia Karell. *So that all*

Karell, whose real name was Helen Laverty, left Springfield to work with Francis G. Cornell and the Bureau of Research and Service at the University of Illinois.

In the same issue of the *Leader and Press*, a front page headline read: "Too Progressive? Not Progressive Enough, Experts Decide: Survey Gives Schools 'Passing' Grade; Survey Decides Springfield Wants Progressive Schools." The headline justified the direction Study had taken Springfield in progressive education, and the article reported that the survey findings indicated that parents and teachers were solidly in favor of Springfield's educational program. The greatest weakness, the article reported, was that Springfield was not modern enough. Pictures of desks fastened to the floor illustrated that in some ways Springfield fell short of standards in modern schools.[49] Moreover, Columbia University, which had conducted summer workshops, warmly commended both the researchers of the survey and praised the efforts of Springfield as a leader in education.

Study himself contributed to the well-orchestrated series of articles supporting progressive education. He wrote an extended four-column statement for the *Leader and Press* praising the survey's "impartiality" and importance in providing direction for school reforms. The title of his article was "'It's No Whitewash Job': Study Says Report Proves Schools on the Right Road."[50]

The Sunshine School patrons, who had initiated the probe into Study's progressive curriculum, responded to the Illini Survey. The patrons' committee criticized the survey by reminding the public that claims of "impartiality" were dubious. Their response focused on the composition of the survey team, the methods for gathering information, the survey instruments used by the investigators, and a reminder that Springfield was not alone in questioning progressive education.[51] The patrons cited opposition that was growing nationwide to progressivism in schools. The patrons dismissed the claim of objectivity in the

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*may learn*, Forward. .

[49] *Leader and Press* (Springfield), 16 November1948.

[50] *Leader and Press* (Springfield), 16 November 1948.

[51] "Sunshine Group Cites Objections to Survey," *Leader and Press* (Springfield), 21 November 1948 and Letter to the Editor, "Claims Report of Surveyors 'Whitewashed' City Schools," *Leader and Press* (Springfield), 28 November 1948.

investigation, pointing out that questionnaires given to teachers had been numbered to remove the opportunity for anonymity. Questionnaires distributed to the public, they claimed, were listed as dichotomies of either/or choices and were inappropriate for those who wanted to register their dissatisfaction. As one patron summarized the entire investigation and the University of Illinois' involvement, "It has the appearance of a survey *by* [emphasis ours] the schools rather than *of* [emphasis ours] the schools."[52]

Although the patrons' committee maintained their pressure on Study, they were clearly overwhelmed by the number of members on the Illini Survey team, its national prestige, and the methods by which it had investigated Springfield. Study had been able temporarily to combat the local protest against progressivism.

In December 1948, one month after the Illini Survey results were released, new criticisms were raised in the pages of the Springfield newspapers. While earlier critics had pinpointed their criticism on the anti-intellectual qualities of progressive education and the performance of Springfield students on measures of basic skills relative to students in other schools, the new criticism questioned the relationship of progressive education to radical political ideology. A December 26 letter to the editor linked progressive education with education in Germany and Russia. Furthermore, the writer, who signed the letter as a "Disgusted Citizen," claimed that the foreign ideas took root in the form of progressive education at Columbia Teachers' College.[53] Within one week, a second letter to the editor, signed this time as "A More Disgusted Citizen," extended the point in arguing that Harold Rugg of Teachers College Columbia used his texts to denigrate "competition" and elevate "cooperation" among students. The critic implied that "leftist" philosophy was being taught through Rugg's textbooks which were being used in Springfield schools.[54]

Harry P. Study had survived the storm of protest against Progressivism. In the next few years, he would no longer tout the "life-adjustment" movement, at least publicly. Yet, he would continue to

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[52] "School Critics Silent on Survey," *The Daily News* (Springfield), 17 November 1948.

[53] "Has School System Come Under Dangerous Radical Influence?" *The News and Leader* (Springfield), 26 December 1948.

[54] "Leftist Influence in Our Schools?" *The News and Leader* (Springfield), 2 January 1949.

implement and develop a progressive program in Springfield schools. Study continued summer workshops for teachers. At the elementary level, programs would emphasize current practices in curriculum, that is child- development; at the secondary level programs emphasized the principles and methods of teaching a "functional curriculum."[55]

Study linked Springfield schools with New York University. He tempered the relationship Springfield had with Columbia University as a result of the controversies which had exploded during the late 1940s. Study, however, was willing to take risks when he invited back to Springfield William Van Til and Mrs. Aleyne C. Haines who had participated in the Illini Survey as workshop speakers. Study also brought in influential speakers such as Dr. Louis E. Raths from New York University who two decades later would be associated with the values clarification instructional strategies. Throughout the remaining years of his tenure as superintendent, Study's workshops stressed "democracy" and the more traditional progressive emphasis upon contemporary problems in organizing the curriculum.[56] The broader curriculum, however, was guided by "life-adjustment" principles.

A Cold War mentality influenced Springfield schools. Reacting to the tenor of the times, the principal of the high school, Dr. C. Benton Manley, burned several pamphlets he had received from the Soviet Embassy to demonstrate that Springfield schools were not prey to the communist influence.[57] For his actions, Manley was commended in an editorial for "doing the greatest good for the largest number of individuals."[58]

Study was cautious when he hired new teachers, especially at the high school level. Study brought in teachers who had grown up locally, in part because the salary was not large enough to recruit teachers who lived far away and, most importantly, because he wanted to maintain a long-practiced tradition of

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[55] "Finest Ever Brought To Springfield: Teachers' Workshop Opening Draws 115 To NYU Courses," *The News and Leader* (Springfield), 5 June 1950.

[56] "Says Education at Crossroads: Educator Worried About the Future," *Leaders and Press* (Springfield), 23 June 1949.

[57] "SHS Burns Red Embassy Bulletins," *Leaders and Press* (Springfield), 14 December 1949.

[58] *News and Leader* (Springfield), 18 December 1949.

hiring teachers with whom the public would have faith. He wanted teachers whom the public could trust, and he looked for teachers who were prepared in an academic discipline and were positively disposed to progressive theories and methods. Such decisions to hire locally were self-defeating. A social problems approach required teachers to engage their students in controversy and be willing to elicit the displeasures of the community. Local hires were most often wedded to the community and preferred to avoid controversies.

The social studies department under the leadership of Harry P. Study emphasized an integrated curriculum consistent with the unified social studies curriculum advocated by Harold and Earle Rugg in Lincoln School at Teachers' College. Approximately 2500 students attended Springfield's Senior High School and curriculum integration involved 35 to 40 faculty members. Syllabi were "not to be placed on the backshelf."[59] Teacher were involved in integrating World history, English, and Biology for sophomores. Films such as "The Howards of Virginia," "Tale of Two Cities," and "The Red Badge of Courage" were part of the coordinated courses. They helped focus the students on social problems and issues. As a former teacher of Springfield schools would later recall, "Even a topic such as driver education had an English component as well as science and social studies components."[60] Of primary importance in the curriculum guide was the emphasis upon discussion of values, race relations, prejudice, bias, and analytical thinking.

Study was determined to maintain a progressive curriculum and did so even when it meant taking an unpopular stance. For example, he was willing to address desegregation issues when he arranged as the featured speaker of the 1950 summer institute Dr. Ernest O. Melby, Dean of the School of Education at New York University. Dean Melby's topic was the challenges of democracy. In part of his speech he pointed out that the United States could never prove the worth of democracy to people overseas unless the American people faced the issue of discrimination against "Jews and Negroes" in their own country.[61]

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[59]Charles Gray, telephone interview by Frederick D. Drake, 10 November 1996.

[60]Charles Gray, letter to Frederick D. Drake, 6 December 1996. Gray's comment was inserted into a draft of this paper which he returned as part of his review and response.

[61] "Challenge Falls On Education: Dean Urges All U.S. To prove Democracy," *Leader and Press* (Springfield), 22 June 1950.

Study was courageous in the selection of speakers who addressed social concerns. But he dealt with the issue of desegregation in the abstract. He was unresponsive when desegregation concerned Springfield and generally avoided the issue of the inequality afforded blacks in schools.

**Contradiction in Progressive Education: The African American Experience in Springfield**

Gunnar Myrdal's 1944 book, *An American Dilemma*, defined the contradictions in American ideals which individuals espouse and their actions, which violate those principles. Nowhere is this more evident than in white treatment of African Americans. The school system of Springfield, Missouri was no different. While there were inconsistencies among the various strands of progressive education that Superintendent Study attempted to weave together, the exclusion of African Americans was the singular greatest weakness in the progressive education program of Springfield, Missouri. The segregation policies of this Ozark community denied African Americans full participation in society. A watershed event in the relations between African Americans and whites in Springfield occurred in 1906 when a crowd of 6,000 people lynched three African American males accused of raping a white woman. Before this Easter weekend tragedy, African Americans constituted ten percent of the Springfield population. Within a forty-eight hour period, hundreds of African Americans fled Springfield. The African American community never forgot the 1906 lynching and today Springfield's black community is less than two percent of the total population.[62] This tragedy is more than numbers. African Americans in Springfield before 1906 had been very active in the community. Many had attained middle class status and been active in Springfield's civic affairs. To be sure, African Americans had been segregated in Springfield and had their own schools beginning in the 1860s. The Freedmen's School was attended by 150 to 160 students in its first year. Additionally, there was a Freedmen's Sunday School for adults who worked during the week. When Springfield initiated its public school system in 1867, the Freedmen's School ended. Forty-three African American students attended a school that met in the African American Methodist Church. In 1872 a two-story brick building, called the "Washington Avenue colored School," was opened for African American

[62] Katherine Lederer, *Many Thousand Gone: Springfield's Lost Black History* (Missouri council for the Humanities and Gannett Foundation, 1986).

students. It remained open until Drury College assumed ownership of the land. In 1883, Lincoln School opened its doors. Located at Center (now Central) and Washington streets, this school site provided the educational setting for students until 1931, when a new Lincoln School was built on North Sherman Street. The new Lincoln School provided a segregated education that lasted until 1955. The Julius Rosenwald Foundation provided partial funding for the new building. In 1931, the Foundation gave $8,000 for the building. That same year, Springfield approved total bonds in the amount of $1,300,000 for new construction. Of this, all except $125,000 was allocated to white education. H.P. Study was the superintendent who arranged the issuing of bonds and attracted the Rosenwald benefactors.

In 1931, there were 13,000 white students and 500 African American students in the Springfield school system. The segregated Lincoln School was consistent in its purposes and practices. Unlike the white schools, the vocational branch of progressive education guided its curriculum. The Lincoln School principal, A.R. Houston, protested against the industrial emphasis of the school, which the Rosenwald Foundation promoted.[63] H.P. Study and Judge Barbour "expressed their keenest appreciation" of the Rosenwald foundation visit to Springfield. They assured the Foundation that they would "gladly receive any suggestions and aid that the fund might offer."[64]

Lincoln School offered vocational education for both African American males and females.[65] By the mid-1930s, H.P. Study closed all the African American schools in southern Springfield. For example, the Douglass School, grades 1-8, had been built to accommodate the large black population in southern Springfield. In 1932, it was closed. Only Lincoln School remained open and it was inconvenient for black residents of the southern section of the city. In the 1940s, the southern part of Springfield experienced rapid growth in terms of new residences for the white population.

As commonly practiced in southern and border states, the students at Lincoln School received books and other materials as hand-me-downs from the white schools after they were sufficiently used by

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[63] Julius Rosenwald Archives, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, Box 351, Folder 8.

[64] Ibid.

[65] "New Lincoln is Dedicated: Final Unit in Big School Building Program IS Formally Opened," *Springfield Leader and Press*, 22 May 1931.

white students. The curriculum did not offer subjects that were offered in neighboring Springfield High School. There were no foreign languages offered and even vocational subjects that required more expensive equipment, such as electrical shops, were missing from the otherwise vocationalized curriculum. Both women and men taught at Lincoln School and all teachers were African Americans. They earned less money than their white counterparts. Neither Drury College nor Southwest Missouri State University admitted African Americans as students. Graduates of Lincoln School who wanted further education usually attended Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. After 17 years Lincoln School created a band program which gained notoriety. Although there were only 300 students in all grades at Lincoln, the band included 50 to 60 students each year. By the late 1940s, Catholic schools in Springfield admitted African American students. Parochial schools initiated integration before the public schools.

In 1954 the Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, radically altered the lives of African American students and teachers in Springfield. H.P. Study was no longer superintendent. His successor was Willard Graff, a former college administrator and long time resident of the Springfield area. Graff moved quickly to initiate what at first glance was the very successful desegregation of Springfield schools. An initial year, 1954-1955, of voluntary desegregation witnessed black students and one Lincoln teacher transferring to formerly all white schools. In the fall of 1955, Springfield schools were formally desegregated. All of the desegregation occurred peacefully. The Lincoln School building became a junior high school and was renamed Eastwood Junior high. In 1962, it was closed and fittingly converted into the Graff Area Vocational Technical Center.

Central High School absorbed the black students and teachers easily. The black population of Springfield was small, and from the perspective of white residents desegregation was a smooth and easy process. White Springfield citizens recall with pride the ease of the 1950s desegregation of their schools. They compared the peaceful desegregation of Springfield to the violence attending school desegregation in other cities located in the South and border states. During the first full year of desegregation, a black male served as president of the student governing body. However, this was an anomaly. A search of the annuals in the years immediately following 1955 reveals very few black participants in band, sports, or other extra-curricular activities at Springfield Central High School, the school where most all of the black students

attended. This is quite surprising given the popularity and success of the band program in the preceding years at Lincoln School.

The principal at Lincoln School during desegregation was Goler Collins. Interviewed in 1954, Collins praised his teachers and acknowledged their abilities to move to the desegregated schools. Although he considered his teachers to be qualified, he cast a warning for the future of his teachers. He anticipated that "some of Lincoln's *most accomplished* [emphasis added] teachers may be used this term as visiting teachers or lecturers in their particular subject all through the system." Collins further speculated, "This might pave the way for their *later acceptance* [emphasis added] as classroom teachers."[66]

For black teachers desegregation meant demotion. The former band director of Lincoln School, Gerald Brooks, now served as the Music Librarian at Central High School. Along with the former band director at Lincoln School the coach of all sports, John B. Hughes, was now assigned as Central's atheletic equipment manager. Both men as well as other black teachers left the Springfield schools by the late 1950s. Elementary female teachers were "integrated on a traveling basis" and "moved from school to school and didn't know where they would be at any given time."[67]

Education for democracy was never extended to include Springfield's black population – students or teachers. For students, elementary schooling was for a time accomplished in the basements of black churches with a few students progressing to the vocationalized curriculum of Lincoln School. In time, all black schools except Lincoln were closed leaving black residents of Springfield, many of whom occupied residences on the southern periphery of the town, at a great distance from the only public school which would educate their children. For African American teachers, they were relegated to second-class status as teachers in Lincoln School. Degrees and other preparation were irrelevant to the white citizens of Springfield who doubted their "fitness" to teach in desegregated schools. Neither the overtly democratic H.P. Study nor the businessman-superintendent Willard Graff were willing or able to include African Americans as full participants in their schools and in their community.

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[66] The New Deal Education," *Bias* 3 August 1954.
[67] "Schools Integrated in Two-Year period," *Springfield News and Leader* 21 January 1979.

**The Fragile Republic Forgotten**

After 28 years of leading Springfield schools, H.P. Study resigned in 1952 from his position as superintendent. His denoument was captured by an event in a nearby school whose residents protested annexation into what they viewed was the inferior Springfield school system. In the spring of 1951 an effigy of Harry P. Study hanged from a cottonwood tree outside the rural school buildings of the Ritter district. A picture that included elementary students and their teacher standing defiantly under the effigy visibly displayed their opposition to absorption into Springfield.[68] The Ritter patrons bitterly opposed annexation. They voiced the usual complaint of rural districts faced with the prospect of merging into larger schools with their children encountering temptations and urban problems. More importantly, though, their rancor centered on Springfield's national reputation as a model for Progressive education. Ever since the 1930s, the national reputation of Springfield public schools was that of a lighthouse, casting a beacon for those schools wishing to chart their course to the best practices of progressive education. Scornfully, Ritter pupils, teachers, and former board members disdained Springfield's academic standards. Ritter patrons preferred to send their children to Willard, a district similar in distance to Springfield but one that had maintained a traditional system of education. Put succinctly, they charged Springfield as offering an inferior academic program, one that neglected teaching basic skills and failed to prepare students for higher education and careers.[69]

The protests leveled against the Springfield public schools were in reality charges against Harry P. Study who had initiated progressive education programs and administered the city's schools since 1924. Nearing the end of his career as Superintendent of the Springfield schools, H.P. Study had encountered increasing opposition to his programs and leadership in the latter part of the 1940s and early 1950s. During his tenure as Superintendent, Study advocated education for democratic citizenship in a community that was conservative in its values and beliefs and racially segregated. His integrated curriculum organized around social issues to promote democratic citizenship was supported by instructional methods that involved students in active inquiry learning. His efforts brought Springfield public schools national

[68] "Reading', Writin' & Rittermatic," *Bias: Springfield's Weekly Newsletter* 28 March 1951.
[69] Ibid

notoriety, as featured in *Life* magazine in 1938. Whereas Study had been able to withstand the local opposition in Springfield to his progressivism, a national movement had begun to swell against progressive education led by influential leaders drawn from the business and military communities and the academic departments of universities.

National leaders' comments began to appear on the pages of local Springfield newspapers. For example, President Harry Truman affirmed the actions of aroused citizens who wanted "better schools throughout the nation." General Omar Bradley said, "When our economic system is challenged; our political tenets are ridiculed; and our enduring spiritual creed is defiled, education must stand in the vanguard of defense." Bradley warned the nation that the American education system, which had been neglected as the United States focused its efforts on winning World War II, was inadequate to meet thechallenges of the post-war world.[70]

Both liberals and conservatives at the national level launched their attack against progressive education. By 1952, their attack had come to a climax when Arthur Bestor, who had suspicions about the progressivism in the College of Education at the University of Illinois, engaged his colleagues in a bitter exchange of views. He expressed in dramatic fashion the concerns of academic departments in universities toward Progressive education. In a 1952 book, *Educational Wastelands*, Bestor accused "educationists" of erecting an "interlocking directorate" of like-minded individuals at universities, at departments of education at the state and national levels, and of superintendents in local school districts.[71] Perhaps, Bestor had in mind the Illini Survey of 1948. In any case, the relationship between the Illini Survey and the Springfield schools was an example of an "interlocking directorate."

Arthur Bestor, a respected historian at the University of Illinois and a winner of the Beveridge award,[72] led a group of sixty-two historians who favored a discipline-based education in public schools. The Bestor group submitted a set of resolutions to the Council of the American Historical Association

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[70] "Education Defense Vanguard, General Declares: School Inadequacy Creeping Up Everywhere, Bradley Says," *The Daily News* (Springfield), 18 January 1950.

[71] See Arthur E. Bestor, *Educational Wastelands* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1953), pp. 101-121.

[72] Marlene M. Wentworth, "Attitudes Towards Learning: An Examination of Arthur E. Bestor's *Educational Wastelands* and the Responses To It" (Master's Thesis, University of Illinois, 1986), p. 1.

(AHA), and within twenty days of their initial circulation nearly 700 scholars, of which 199 were historians, added their ascent as signatories. In late December 1952, AHA members listened carefully to the Bestor group's petitions, but the AHA took a more cautious approach and passed its own more conciliatory resolution. The AHA recognized the serious concerns addressed by the group of sixty-two; that is, it understood the desire to "re-establish" discipline-based education. Subsequently, the resolution passed by the AHA postponed action pending involvement and deliberation of other learned societies and professional educators. Nevertheless, the Bestor group's proposed resolutions were published in *School and Society*, and favorable editorials were printed in newspapers throughout the United States, including a January 2, 1953 issue of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*.[73] The pressure of Bestor's charge of anti-intellectualism fueled a Springfield Board of Education that was already susceptible to "soft on communism" charges.

Study was an old man by this time, and the board wanted him to resign. The community wanted a businessman to head their schools and insisted that Springfield "get back to the 3Rs and watch out for communism."[74] Springfield schools abandoned progressive education as a result of the combined effects of anti-communism and the concomitant charge that schools failed to attend to the basics of education such as reading and mathematics.

A crusade of anti-communism swept the nation in the late 1940s and the decade of the 1950s. Criticisms of progressive education, residing on a foundation of anti-communist concerns, exposed the particular weakness of "life-adjustment" education as a variant of progressivism. "life-adjustment" education was meant to socialize students into roles. This strand of progressive education as woven into the Springfield schools by Harry Study in the 1940s was perceived by the public as sorting citizens into vocational roles that would better serve the purposes of powerful interests. "Life-adjustment" was essentially anti-intellectual socialization.

The belief that only 20% of America's students would be well-served by an academic education and that 20% of the students would be well-served by a vocational education left 60% of the students to be

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[73] Bestor, *Educational Wastelands*, pp. 197-199.

[74] Charles Gray, telephone interview by Frederick D. Drake, 10 November 1996.

socialized into existing roles of American society.[75] A "life-adjustment" rationale for education has its origins in what David Tyack has described as the "administrative" strand of progressive education. "Administrative progressives" viewed the school as an agency to sort students into their vocational destinies. Throughout the 1940s Springfield education had been defined by an uneasy alliance of democratic progressivism and an evolving "life-adjustment" philosophy. Early in the decade faculty members of Northwestern University organized summer institutes around the theme of education for democratic citizenship. This theme was reiterated in institutes organized by Teachers College and New York University. The closing programs of these institutes often featured eloquent speakers praising the importance of democracy in American society and American education. This phenomenon represents another strand of progressive education, "pedagogical progressivism" defined and articulated by John Dewey and his interpreters throughout the first half of the twentieth century. These individuals stressed the importance of democratic education in maintaining and recreating the democratic republic in the hearts and minds and actions of each generation of American citizens. According to Dewey, education should create the "Greater Community" in which individuals, in spite of all their differences, would come together in a common understanding and commitment to extend the democratic ideals to all Americans. A question exists, however, whether the teachers understood these purposes.[76]

This uneasy alliance between "Education for Democracy" and "life-adjustment" education endured during the exigencies of World War II. "Life-adjustment" education did not draw public scrutiny until after the war; nor did some of the radicalism associated with "Education for Democracy." These two somewhat incompatible strands of educational thought and practice were allowed to co-exist in the decade of the 1940s, and they were perceived as woven from the same cloth. The Springfield public questioned the effectiveness of progressive education in general. The conditions of a burgeoning school age population

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[75] Arthur E. Bestor was an early critic of a "life-adjustment." See Arthur E. Bestor, *Educational Wastelands*, p. 82.,

[76] Evidence from William Van Til's interviews indicate that teachers created the workshop program out of problems they considered important. Newspaper articles reported that teachers found the workshops fun and interesting. No evidence exists that teachers understood the theoretical foundations of progressive education, particularly "pedagogical progressivism." Interviews with teachers revealed that they did not understand the purposes behind progressive education. Moreover, when Charles Gray taught at Springfield High School he did not understand the principles underlying progressive education. Later, as a graduate student at the University of Illinois he would come to comprehend progressive education.

placed a strain on the public's ability to provide financial support for public education in Springfield and elsewhere provided the environment to undermine the dream of education to preserve, and perhaps even to enhance, the quality of democratic government and human relationships.

Some of the critics of "life-adjustment" education not only condemned the anti-democratic nature of this practice but also called for a "return" of schools to a sound business management and a better economy of operation in light of the rapidly expanding population of elementary and secondary students. Its anti-democratic implications tainted progressive education in general and held up to question the social problems approach which organized the curriculum in Springfield schools. The scrutiny of a public concerned with the perceived failure of the schools to teach basic knowledge and skills and the growing financial stress of the first wave of the baby boom exposed the existing school curriculum to criticism. Fear that students were ill-prepared to resist communist propaganda further aggravated the situation facing Superintendent Study. A social problems organization was one of many aspects of the curriculum which fell prey to charges of anti-intellectualism.

Willard Graff, a Dean of Students at Southwest Missouri State College, was an experienced superintendent. A keen observer of Springfield schools, Graff replaced Study. As the new Superintendent of Schools, Graff dismantled the progressivism Study had built.[77] In 1955 Graff changed the philosophy guiding Springfield schools. He instituted changes in the school's organization and curriculum. Graff put an end to the combined, interdisciplinary high school organization that had been created under Study to implement problems-centered instruction.[78] Academic disciplines were now separated in the Springfield high schools. Combined classes, a vestige of Study's progressive education, were no longer offered to students and the detailed curriculum guide which had taken over twenty-five years to develop through the cooperative efforts of administrators and teachers was phased out within three years of Study's departure.

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[77] *So that all may learn*, p. 55.

[78] Charles E. Gray, Interview, Transcripts and Charles E. Gray, telephone interview by Frederick D. Drake, 10 November 1996.

**Conclusion**

While recent historians of education, notably David Tyack and Joel Spring,[79] have contributed greatly to an understanding of education in public schools, they have failed to examine the decade of the 1940s. This decade is marked by a foreign war and a home-front struggle surrounding the purposes and practices of education. The battle was initiated in the 1920s as educators implemented their various interpretations of progressive education. H.P. Study brought the controversy to Springfield in 1924. In the following decades, advocates of a vocationalized secondary school curriculum and individuals who argued for democratic purposes laid claims to the curriculum.

Harry Pray Study, as Superintendent of Springfield Public Schools, was caught in the contest between "education for democracy" and "life-adjustment" education as a variant of vocational education. Study, like so many other individuals who are susceptible to political pressures, embraced and cast off ideals and programs as they gained and lost popularity in his Missouri community. He remained blind to racial prejudice in his community. H. P. Study's failure in progressive education rested in his inconsistency. While his rhetoric remained true to education for democracy, economic circumstances and perhaps a lack of vision moved him to incorporate vocational education programs that were antithetical to democratic practices. His greatest failure appears to be his all too-willing compliance in racial segregation and providing black students and teachers with inferior opportunities in education.

While Study was unable to withstand the criticism of the public, especially his association with Columbia Teacher's College and their "frontier thinkers" as well as his affiliation with the University of Illinois, the movement toward vocationalism , which was less controversial and was not tainted by either political or educational radicalism, survived in Springfield and other schools. The criticism of Arthur Bestor, initially targeted toward "life-adjustment" education, spread to the larger progressive education. Bestor's attacks damaged progressive education in the process and had little effect on vocational education. If anything, with the coming of the Cold War and Cold War anxieties, vocational education was

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[79]David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974) and Joel Spring, *The Sorting Machine: National Educational Policy Since 1945*) New York: McKay, 1976).

transformed to incorporate academic disciplines to prepare individuals for their vocational roles as scientists and mathematicians.

Whereas critics of a "life-adjustment" curriculum such as Arthur E. Bestor posited that a "life-adjustment" curriculum "declares invalid most of the assumptions that have underlain democracy,"[80] we believe that "life-adjustment" was far more damaging in the long run. It undermined democracy as a purpose for schooling. Vocationalism, which had long been one of the purposes for education,[81] was elevated in status to become the primary, if not the sole purpose, for elementary and secondary education. The fears of Jean Bethke Elshtain and others about democracy's fragile nature and tenuous status in the United States may have had their roots in the 1940s when vocationalism gained a stronger foothold on American education and the broad sweep of America's democratic vision was narrowed to focus on vocational training for the next generation.

[80] See Arthur E. Bestor, *Educational Wastelands*, p. 82.

[81] [NEA] Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, Bulletin 35 (1918).